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ABSTRACT

In 1993, the Universidad Autonoma de Santo Domingo (UASD), in the Dominican Republic, and New York's LaGuardia Community College (LaGCC) entered into a partnership to establish a series of community colleges in the Dominican Republic. The colleges were designed to foster economic growth, prepare graduates for transfer to the UASD to complete baccalaureate degrees, and meet the educational and training needs of area residents. One of the colleges, the Centro Universitario Regional de Suroeste, was established in the country's Barahona region, an underdeveloped area close to Haiti that has been declared a national site of interest for tourism development. A four-part implementation strategy was developed, including the following components: (1) an innovative curriculum was developed that included courses on travel and tourism, computer technology, general education, entrepreneurship, cooperative education, and English as a Foreign Language; (2) an advisory board of local business people was created, providing land and funds for construction; (3) the a small business resource center was established; and (4) a language instructor was hired to teach English. Faculty and staff from LaGCC provided a broad range of technical support in establishing the college, including assistance with curriculum and facilities design. In the college's first graduation, 32 of the 35 entering students completed their program and 75% had full-time jobs at the time of graduation. (YKH)

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Cooperative Education: An International Collaborative

Raymond C. Bowen

Paper presented at the World Association of Cooperative Education (Capetown, South Africa, August 18-22, 1997)

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COOPERATIVE EDUCATION:
AN INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATIVE

World Association of Cooperative Education
Capetown, South Africa
August 18-22, 1997

Dr. Raymond C. Bowen, President
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BACKGROUND

Four years ago, the Universidad Autonoma de Santo Domingo (UASD), the oldest university in the western hemisphere, founded in 1539, invited Fiorello H. LaGuardia Community College (LaGCC) of the City University of New York to be its partner in establishing a series of community colleges in the Dominican Republic. The primary mission of these new two-year colleges was to be the engine for economic growth in the regions they served, by developing a pool of high performance technical personnel needed to attract investment capital. They also wanted to develop graduates who could successfully start up new business ventures. Specific programs of study would be determined by the long-range economic development plans for each region formulated through a combination of municipal government, regional or state government and national government decisions.

In addition to the primary mission of stimulating economic development, these new community colleges would have two other important missions: (1) to prepare its graduates for transfer to UASD to complete a baccalaureate degree, and (2) to meet the broad educational and training needs of residents of the region.

In 1992 the UASD made a strategic decision to develop community colleges in various regions throughout the Dominican Republic where they previously had existing branch campuses. Clearly these new institutions were not to be extensions of the existing campuses, but rather, independent colleges operating under the auspices of the UASD.

The Dominican government and the Inter-American Development Bank had undertaken a project by which several Dominican universities and technical institutes would receive funding to develop two-year technical programs in various areas of the country. The UASD, decided to develop its programs at the main campus in Santo Domingo, and in two regional centers: San Francisco de Macaris and Barahona.

The region of Barahona was selected as the initial site of implementation for several reasons:

- it is located in one of the most underdeveloped southwest regions of the country;

- it has been declared a national site of interest for the development of tourism. Presently, new resorts are being built and an international airport has recently started operating;

- its closeness to the border with Haiti also provided the possibility of Haitian students coming to Barahona to study at the center. An opportunity also existed for Barahona faculty and Haitian faculty to work together and develop similar centers in Haiti.

- there was strong community commitment. Land had been donated by members of the community for the construction of the new center. The community was also very concerned that mistakes that had been made in the development of tourism in other parts of the country (which affected the environment and ecosystems of regions) would not be made in Barahona.

The first programs of study offered were travel and tourism and computer technology.

To establish a community college in Barahona, the UASD needed an American community college as a strategic partner who would provide technical support. After six months of extensive research and visits to various community colleges, the UASD invited LaGuardia Community College to be its strategic partner. There were a number of factors in this decision including the successful cooperative education program at LaGCC. Our institution is the only comprehensive community college in the United States which has a mandatory cooperative education component in all programs of study with full-time students. Students are required to complete three full-time cooperative education work assignments for which they receive academic credit and are given a letter grade. Because of the academic requirement, the faculty of LaGCC have invested time and energy in developing a pedagogical model that integrates the classroom learning and work experience. (For further information on the LaGCC and the Regional Universidad de Suroesta. . . . .. cooperative education programs, refer to the paper presented by Professor Bellini and Dean Heinemann.)

To finalize the partnership, an agreement between the two institutions was signed in March, 1993 and renewed in October of 1996. (See Appendix A for a copy of the most recent agreement.)

ESTABLISHING THE NEW COLLEGE

After the agreement was signed, a Planning Committee was established with key administrative personnel from the UASD and LaGCC. And, a retired professor/administrator from the UASD was retained by LaGCC to be its resident representative to the project in the Dominican Republic. To achieve the primary objective of supporting regional economic development, the Committee decided upon the following four-part implementation strategy:

1. An innovative curriculum that was constructed with five basic components:

   (a) Courses in the two majors being offered: travel and tourism, and computer technology.

   (b) Courses in the liberal arts:
   a required general education component which adheres to the UASD basic curriculum philosophy. Also, this requirement better prepares graduates to continue studies for a four-year college degree. It was expected that few students, if any, would transfer to the main campus in Santo Domingo after graduation. Rather, graduates would enter the labor market after graduation and continue their studies sometime in the future.

   (c) A three-course sequence in entrepreneurship which graduates from all programs are required to take, and which prepares them to open their own businesses in the future. We believed that a strong background in entrepreneurship, coupled with the establishment of small business incubators and the attraction of capital investment would produce new jobs in the region. The entrepreneurship course requirement was the basis of our strategy. In addition, a key objective of the cooperative education placement component was to analyze the organization with whom the student was placed from an entrepreneurial perspective. The integrative seminar enabled students to evaluate and reflect on their experience from an entrepreneurial perspective.

The last requirement in the prorgram maintained that all students repare an acceptable business plan as a graduation requirement.

(d) A two-placement cooperative education requirement was modeled after the LaGCC approach. The cooperative education sequence was made up of a required preparatory course; the placement and an integrative seminar taken either concurrent with the work experience or when the student returns to the campus.

(e) An English as a Foreign Language courses requirement.

2. An active advisory board of local business people was established. Their strong initial involvement and financial support was critical to the establishment of the first college, the Centro Universitario Regional de Suroeste. In addition to giving land to the UASD for building the campus, they provided funds to construct the first building of the new college.

3. The new college would establish a small business resource center which would connect graduates with promising ventures to sources of start-up capital. The center will also provide technical assistance not only to graduates, but to other small businesses in the region so they will have the greatest chance for success.

4. A language instructor to provide, English as a Foreign Language, to students of the Barahona region.

LaGCC faculty and staff provided a broad range of technical support in establishing the college:

1. Faculty in Travel and Tourism and Computer Technology worked with their colleagues in designing the curriculum, developing individual courses, writing syllabi and selecting textbooks. LaGCC faculty traveled to the Dominican Republic and faculty from the UASD spent time at LaGCC.

2. Faculty and administrators from LaGCC's Cooperative Education division worked with UASD faculty to design and implement the cooperative education component. These included designing the preparatory course, the integrative seminar, administrative systems to support the program, marketing materials and, visited potential employers with the regional college's program director to train the individual in internship development skills.

3. Staff from LaGCC's Campus Planning Office worked with UASD personnel to design the laboratories needed to support both programs of study. LaGCC faculty also developed the specifications for the laboratory equipment.

4. Staff from both institutions approached IBM, and GBM, its independent affiliate in the Dominican Republic, to receive the equipment for the first computer laboratory at the two-year college, as a donation,. The equipment included the latest hardware and software needed to establish a state-of-the-art networked laboratory. LaGCC faculty went to Barahona and set up the laboratory, installing the software, and training faculty and the laboratory technician on use and maintenance of the equipment.

5. LaGCC faculty and staff were invited to conduct professional development workshops in such areas as the use of learning communities/learning collaboratives as an instructional strategy, and use of computers in teaching mathematics.

6. Working together, the two institutions obtained a USIA Academic Partnership grant to support two LaGCC faculty members' presence in Barahona to help design the EFL component.

7. LaGCC has introduced the UASD to the State University of New York's College of Environmental Studies and Forestry where the two institutions are working on a two-year degree program in Environmental Technology to be offered at the Barahona College.

OUTCOMES

On January 31, 1997 the Centro Universitario Regional de Suroeste held its first graduation. The results are very encouraging. Of the 20 students who entered the travel and tourism program, 19 graduated. Of the 15 students who started the computer technology program, 13 graduated. One student accepted a full-time job offer from his employer after his first placement while the other student is still taking classes and is expected to graduate this year. At the time of graduation, seventy-five percent had full-time jobs. College officials were confident that the rest of the graduates would also soon be employed. Officials also reported that the employers were satisfied with the cooperative education program. In addition, new employers have begun contacting the college anticipating that they too, may become a part of the cooperative education program.

These results have encouraged UASD administrators to move ahead in establishing new community colleges in other regions of the country. This partnership initially centered on the development of community college type

institutions in the Dominican Republic. However, other relationships have also developed between the two institutions. A short-term study program for LaGCC students and students from other C.U.N.Y. units will begin in January, 1998 at

USAD. In the fall of 1998, a cooperative education exchange program providing internships in New York City and Santo Domingo is expected to begin. In October of 1997, a partnership among UASD, LaGCC, and the Queens Symphony Orchestra will offer a concert of works by noted Dominican composers to the Dominican community of New York City. Currently, LaGCC provides classrooms and office space which enables the UASD to offer graduate courses in Bilingual Education to former students and graduates now residing in New York City. These are examples of future possibilities. It is clear that the strategic alliance that has been established between UASD and LaGCC has not only developed a two-year college model that holds great promise in stimulating economic growth in underdeveloped regions, but also establishes long term relationships that will benefit both institutions.